

The Dual Power

Published: *Pravda* No. 28, April 9, 1917. Signed: *N. Lenin*. Published according to the text in *Pravda*.

Source: [Lenin Collected Works](#), Progress Publishers, 1964, Moscow, [Volume 24](#), pages 38-41.

Translated: Isaacs Bernard

Transcription\Markup: [B. Baggins](#) and [D. Walters](#)

Public Domain: Lenin Internet Archive 1999 (2005). You may freely copy, distribute, display and perform this work; as well as make derivative and commercial works. Please credit "Marxists Internet Archive" as your source. • [README](#)

The basic question of every revolution is that of state power. Unless this question is understood, there can be no intelligent participation in the revolution, not to speak of guidance of the revolution.

The highly remarkable feature of our revolution is that it has brought about a *dual power*. This fact must be grasped first and foremost: unless it is understood, we cannot advance. We must know how to supplement and amend old "formulas", for example, those of Bolshevism, for while they have been found to be correct on the whole, their concrete realisation *has turned out to be* different. *Nobody* previously thought, or could have thought, of a dual power.

What is this dual power? Alongside the Provisional Government, the government of *bourgeoisie*, *another government* has arisen, so far weak and incipient, but undoubtedly a government that actually exists and is growing – the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies.

What is the class composition of this other government? It consists of the proletariat and the peasants (in soldiers' uniforms). What is the political nature of this government? It is a revolutionary dictatorship, i.e., a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and *not on a law* enacted by a centralised state power. It is an entirely different kind of power from the one that generally exists in the parliamentary bourgeois-democratic republics of the usual type still prevailing in the advanced countries of Europe and America. This circumstance often over looked, often not given enough thought, yet it is the crux of the matter. *This power is of the same type* as the [Paris Commune](#) of 1871.

The fundamental characteristics of this type are: (1) the source of power is not a law previously discussed and enacted by parliament, but the direct initiative of the people from below, in their local areas—direct “seizure”, to use a current expression; (2) the replacement of the police and the army, which are institutions divorced from the people and set against the people, by the direct arming of the whole people; order in the state under such a power is maintained by the armed workers and peasants *themselves*, by the armed people *themselves*; (3) officialdom, the bureaucracy, are either similarly replaced by the direct rule of the people themselves or at least placed under special control; they not only become elected officials, but are also *subject to recall* at the people’s first demand; they are reduced to the position of simple agents; from a privileged group holding “*jobs*” remunerated on a high, bourgeois scale, they become workers of a special “arm of the service”, whose remuneration *does not exceed* the ordinary pay of a competent worker.

This, and this *alone*, constitutes the *essence* of the Paris Commune as a special type of state. This essence has been forgotten or perverted by the Plekhanovs (downright chauvinists who have betrayed Marxism), the Kautskys (the men of the “Centre”, i.e., those who vacillate between chauvinism and Marxism), and generally by all those Social-Democrats, Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc., etc., who now rule the roost.

They are trying to get away with empty phrases, evasions, subterfuges; they congratulate each other a thousand times upon the revolution, but refuse to *consider what* the Soviets of Workers’ and Soldiers’ Deputies *are*. They refuse to recognise the obvious truth that in as much as these Soviets exist, *in as much as* they are a power, we have in Russia a state of the *type* of the Paris Commune.

I have emphasised the words “in as much as”, for it is only an incipient power. By direct agreement with the bourgeois Provisional Government and by a series of actual concessions, it has itself *surrendered and is surrendering* its positions to the bourgeoisie.

Why? Is it because Chkheidze, Tsereteli, Steklov and Co. are making a “mistake”? Nonsense. Only a philistine can think so – not a Marxist. The reason is *insufficient class-consciousness* and organisation of the proletarians and peasants. The “mistake” of the leaders I have named lies in their petty-bourgeois position, in the fact that instead of clarifying the minds of the workers, they are *befogging* them; instead of dispelling petty-bourgeois illusions, they are *instilling* them; instead of freeing the people from bourgeois influence, they are *strengthening* that influence.

It should be clear from this why our comrades, too, make so many mistakes when putting the question “simply”: Should the Provisional Government be overthrown immediately?

My answer is: (1) it should be overthrown, for it is an oligarchic, bourgeois, and not a people’s government, and *is unable* to provide peace, bread, or full freedom;(2) It cannot be overthrown just now, for it is being kept in power by a direct and indirect, a formal and actual *agreement* with the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies, and primarily with the chief Soviet, the Petrograd Soviet; (3) generally, it cannot be “overthrown” in the ordinary way, for it rests on the “*support*” given to the bourgeoisie by the *second* government—the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies, and that government is the only possible revolutionary government, which directly expresses the mind and will of the majority of the workers and peasants. Humanity has not yet evolved and we do not as yet know a type of government superior to, and better than, the Soviets of Workers’, Agricultural Labourers’, Peasants’, and Soldiers’ Deputies.

To become a power the class-conscious workers must win the majority to their side. *As long as no* violence is used against the people there is no other road to power. We are not Blancists, we do not stand for the seizure of power by a minority. We are Marxists, we stand for proletarian class struggle against petty-bourgeois intoxication, against chauvinism-defencism, phrase-mongering and dependence on the bourgeoisie.

Let us create a proletarian Communist Party; its elements have already been created by the best adherents of Bolshevism; let us rally our ranks for proletarian class work; and larger and larger numbers from among the proletarians, from among the *poorest* peasants will range themselves on our side. For *actual experience* will from day to day shatter the petty-bourgeois illusions of those “Social-Democrats”, the Chkheidzes, Tseretelis, Steklovs and others, the “Socialist Revolutionaries”, the petty bourgeois of an even purer water, and so on and so forth.

The bourgeoisie stands for the undivided power of the bourgeoisie.

The class-conscious workers stand for the undivided power of the Soviets of Workers’, Agricultural Labourers’, Peasants’, and Soldiers’ Deputies – for undivided power made possible not by adventurist acts, but by *clarifying* proletarian minds, by *emancipating* them from the influence of the bourgeoisie.

The petty bourgeoisie – “Social-Democrats”, Socialist-Revolutionaries, etc., etc. – vacillate and, thereby, *hinder* this clarification and emancipation.

This is the actual, the *class* alignment of forces that determines our tasks.

From: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/09.htm>